592 so firmly excluded from participation in its ev-
786 eryday affairs. If this were so we would have
[152] evidence that the Nayars, in spite of their extreme emphasis on the matrilineal line, virtual sexual promiscuity within the caste, and minimal recognition of paternity, had an Oedipus Complex [59] which caused men to fear and propitiate the phallic representatives of their fathers, and women to have fantasies about "possession" by paternal phallic symbols. Unfortunately snake worship is now practically extinct; I never saw it, and found present-day informants able to make few associations about it.

592 If the snake-gods were, at least unconsciously,
786 collective "fathers" of the taravad, it is inter-
831 esting that they were represented in an archaic, dream-like form as snakes (pure phallic animal symbols) robbed of their human attributes. This would accord with the fact that Oedipal hostility of the father, which must have been experienced by Nayar children since they slept, and do today, in the mother's room till age four or five and have opportunity to witness parental intercourse, would be repressed before latency and leave its mark only in unconscious phallic fantasies about the father which could be translated into the cultural idiom of beliefs about harmful snake-gods. Such archaic representations contrast with the less distorted ones of male forbears of the taravad.

592 These latter comprise only the spirits of dead
769 karanavans of the property-group, not of men
778 who died without attaining to headship, and very seldom of women. (5) In each house, a room

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

marriage rite. At the auspicious time, each girl was led in turn by her brother from the house and seated on the plank. At a sign from the astrologer, the Brahman priest (called Elayad, a low sub-caste of Nambûdiris who officiate at Nayar funerals) handed the *tâli* to the bridegroom, who tied it round the girl's neck. The nineteen couples were then secluded in the house for the remaining three days and nights of the rites. Informants said that in modern times when lineages were often large, the couples numerous and the girls sometimes infants, cohabitation would be unlikely. It was not, however, forbidden, and appears formerly to have been required. It is clear that the rite was ritually if not actually a defloration ceremony, as is indicated by the saying *Tâli kettiu amma âyi* ('having had the *tâli* tied, a girl becomes a [married] woman').

Next morning the party reassembled without the couples, and offerings to Bhagavadi took place. The participants were a Sûdra Nayar oracle (*velichchappâd*), a Vattekad (oil-monger) Nayar sacrificial priest, and a Nayar boy who accompanied the oracle, carrying a staff to the top of which was tied a brush of coconut flowers. These officiants perform similarly by hereditary right at the annual Bhagavadi temple festival. The priest offered rice, paddy, coconuts, incense, a burning lamp, and toddy before the branch of the milk-tree, following which he sacrificed a cock and poured out a vessel of red blood-like liquid. The oracle then donned a waist-band and anklets of bells and took a sickle in his hand. (These symbolize the power of Bhagavadi: when he dons them it is believed that she enters and possesses the oracle.) Accompanied by loud music, he leapt wildly in the air, shouting hoarsely and chopping his forehead with the sickle till blood flowed down. In this frenzy he called out to the host *kâranavan* that the goddess was appeased by his offerings. His possession then subsided and his insignia were removed.

Bhagavadi is the Malabar goddess of war, smallpox, and the soil. Her idol, in the Nayar village temple, is a hollow cylindrical stone, a symbol of the vagina, as the Brahmanical idol of Siva is the lingam, a symbol of the phallus. Bhagavadi is also worshipped as the oracle's sickle, as a picture drawn in chalks on the floor, as the milk-tree (*Alstonia scholaris*), and as the ancestral sword of a Nayar lineage. She is believed to have protected the Nayars in war. She is fierce and vengeful, her chief power being to inflict smallpox. She is propitiated by similar rites during smallpox epidemics, on the sixteenth day after a smallpox death, and on the last night of her annual temple festival, during which she is angry with the villagers who must observe sexual continence.

The remainder of the second day, and the third day, were devoted to feasting and music. On the fourth morning each couple went to the village bathing pool where, hand-in-hand, they took a purifying plunge-bath. Then, decked in fine clothes, they returned to the linrage house. In the kitchen each couple ate a meal from the same loaf. The company was then fed, but on this day, alone of all days, women ate before men. The bridegrooms received clothing and foodstuffs from the *kâranavan* and departed for their respective homes.

In Pâlakkara the *tâli*-tier might remain with his bride as her first *sambandham* lover. At the last *tâli*-rite two of the nineteen bridegrooms remained in association with their brides, though one abandoned his shortly afterwards. The other seventeen girls formed unions with other men of the village shortly after puberty. In all *tâli*-rites in this area, however, the 'bridegroom' remained the ritual husband of his 'bride' throughout his life, though he need never visit her again. At his death, the 'wife', together with her children by whatever physiological father, must observe fifteen days' pollution. Death pollution was otherwise traditionally observed only for matrilineal kin: not until recently was it observed for the *sambandham* lover and the physiological father. The *tâli*-tier of a woman was regarded, moreover, as the ritual father of her children. If they knew him, the children called this man *appan* (the Tamil word for 'father', used for the *genitor* by Tiyyars and Christians) as distinct from *acchan* (originally

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll Nayar

Rangachari (1909, V, p. 320), reports that in Travancore, the 'leading villager' gave his consent and received gifts from the bridegroom 'as if to recompense him'. This recalls the statement of one informant of Pālakkara, who said he had heard a rumour that in ancient days, the Aśān of the village had the right to deflower retainer-Nayar women, a right which he might forgo on payment of a sum of money.[1]

The *tāli* is, as Thurston & Rangachari observe, shaped like a leaf of the *Ficus religiosa* (pipal) tree (*aswatha*). This tree is worshipped by Nayars, Nambūdiris, and Tamil Brahmans as an embodiment of the Sanskrit god Vishnu. It is said to symbolize male creative power, the female tree with which it is associated being the *veppu* or margosa (*Melia Azadirachta*).[2] In the Tamil country, the two trees are frequently planted together in a mock-marriage ceremony, so that the creeping stems of the margosa may twine round the pipal tree like the arms of a faithful wife round her husband. Among Nayars, Tiyyars, Nambūdiris, and Tamil Brahmans, barren women are counselled to march a hundred and eight times round the ficus tree to obtain children. We are therefore probably justified in regarding the *tāli* as a phallic symbol, presented to the bride as a sign 'that she may now do what she pleases'.[3]

Innes (1908, p. 174) and Krishna Menon (1894) reports that, traditionally, the bridegroom's party approached the house flourishing weapons and shouting a war-cry. Later, before tying the *tāli*, the bridegroom laid his sword across his lap, and the girl took an arrow and a mirror in her hand. Mateer (1883) says that in Travancore, if the family were too poor to perform the ceremonies, the girl's mother might tie her *tāli* before a sword or a clay idol representing Kāma Devan, the Hindu god of passion.[4] Similarly, since the traditional ceremony died out, many Pālakkara mothers take their immature daughters to some Brahmanical temple dedicated to Vishnu (the god of marital and domestic prosperity) and themselves tie the *tāli* before the god.

Fawcett (1901, pp. 229–32) observes that the girl's brother carried her into the marriage hall from the house, bore her three times round it, and seated her to the left of the bridegroom; Innes (1908, p. 174) remarks that she might be carried there either by her brother or her *kāranavan*. On the fourth day, after their bath, the couple returned to the girl's ancestral house to find its doors shut against them. The bridegroom must force open the doors before he could take his seat with his bride in the kitchen where they ate a meal together. Alternatively, he might enter the house last in the procession, when boys of the girl's lineage pelted him with plantain fruits, which he must ward off with his shield.

According to Innes (*ibid.* p. 173), before the rite the girl was secluded for three days and nights in an inner room of the house, with a brass hand-mirror in her right hand, an arrow in her left, and the eight auspicious objects before her. On the second morning she went to the bathing-pool, on the bank of which she must, after bathing, jump thrice over a brass vessel of water with an unhusked coconut on top, overturning both at the third time.

I turn to the rite in the royal lineages. In the Cochin lineage, which prides itself on ancient, 'true' Kshattriya descent, the rite took the form of a Brahmanical marriage ceremony with Sanskrit *mantras* from the Grihya Sutras. It was performed separately for each girl before puberty by a Nambūdiri, who must actually deflower the girl on the night of the ceremonies. The bridegroom received a fee and departed after four days. The girl might then cohabit

[1] Dr Aiyappan (1933) similarly reports that the Aśān in some areas deflowered Nayar women at a ceremonial initiation.

[2] For a discussion of the symbolic significance of this tree see Dubois (1906, p. 643).

[3] My interpretation of the *tāli* as a phallic symbol is the more likely in that among Tamil Smartha Brahmans of Tanjore, the marriage *tāli* bears engraved upon it a *lingam*, the phallic emblem of Śiva.

[4] This modern rite recalls the ceremonial marriage of the Devadasis (temple-dancers and prostitutes) in the Tamil country, in which the dedicated girl's *tāli* is tied by the temple priest before the god of the temple, or, if a girl fails to become dedicated to a god before puberty, by her mother in the presence of a sword. The 'marriage' is followed after puberty by the nuptials, at which a wealthy high caste man of the neighbourhood passes the night with the girl as the first of her lovers.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll

588 On the day fixed the couple dressed in cloths given by the girl's father, and the girl was led into the hall by her mother's brother and seated on the plank. The boy was carried in on the shoulders of his mother's brother, borne thrice round and seated to the right of her, her own mother's brother's wife sitting on her left. The girl's father three times asked the astrologer if the auspicious moment had come, after which the bridegroom tied the *tāli*. Aiyappan states that the boy placed the *tāli* round the girl's neck, where it was tied behind by her mother or her father's sister. Iyer reports that in Cochin, the boy stood behind the girl and tied it himself. The couple were given a sweet drink as at a normal marriage. The girl was then secluded for three days with the new loin-cloth which the boy had worn kept always beside her. On the fourth morning, the couple bathed together and were taken to worship [184] at the temple. In South Malabar, though not in Cochin, the loin-cloth was then taken from [586] the girl's room and cut in two, as at the divorce in a Nayar rite. The bridegroom then took [613] a thread of it and, as at a normal divorce, snapped it saying to the girl's brother, 'Here is your sister's *ācharam*.' He departed taking the two pieces of cloth and a few rupees paid by the girl's family. As among Nayars, a whole *taravād* might hold the ceremonies for all its immature girls, separate bridegrooms then being required for each.

184 This ceremony, more clearly than the North Malabar Tiyyar one, is a mock-marriage
588 of the girl to a vicarious husband. It would be less appropriate for the mother's brother's
[589] wife or the father's sister to tie the *tāli* in this group, since cross-cousin marriage, though preferential, is not enjoined to the extent which it is in the north. Even so, the mother's brother's wife, perhaps as potential mother-in-law, performs preliminary rites. On the face of things, however, it seems extraordinary that in this group where the marriage bond is strong, father-hood known within a group of brothers, inheritance patrilineal, and the wife at least partly incorporated into the lineage of her husband, such a rite should be performed at all. It is significant that the Tiyyar *tāli*-tier does not take over the role of ritual father to the woman's [765] children by her later husbands, nor does he in any sense remain a husband to the woman. Unless she is married to him after puberty, neither the girl nor her children observe pollution [60] for his death nor use kinship terms for him. This difference between South Malabar Tiyyars and Nayars befits the difference between Nayar matriliny with its denial of the social aspect [613] of physiological paternity, and the Tiyyar patrilineal lineage system with its emphasis on the legitimacy of children. But why did the Tiyyars perform the rite at all? Since they themselves have no answer to this question, except that it was part of ancient custom, we are driven to look for an explanation in terms of unconscious motivations.

Part V. Interpretation of the *Tāli*-Rite

184 The ceremonies vary in detail but have certain features in common (see Chart I). The
588 rite must in all cases be performed before puberty, and is always a symbolic defloration.
831 This is most clear in the royal lineages, where the bridegroom actually deflowers the girl. Among South Malabar Nayars, the aggressive approach of the bridegroom's party suggests a sexual attack, as does the action of the bridegroom who places his sword across his lap before tying the *tāli* on the bride. When, on the fourth morning, the bridegrooms force open the shut doors of the girls' lineage house, it is clear that they are, as strangers, making an aggressive entry into the *taravād*, i.e. symbolically deflowering its women.

In all the ceremonies other ritual acts make it clear that the rite is a symbolic defloration. The lit wick, arrow, sword, coconut tree, staff, sun, sky, peacock-feathers, the corner-post of the marriage-shed and the bamboo rod stuck in a coconut are readily recognized as phallic symbols recurrent in South Indian ritual; while paddy, rice, coconut inflorescence, rouge-bottle, bell-metal mirror (worshipped in temples as symbol of Bhagavadi), mud pot of water,

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar
Tiyyar

and coconut symbolize female fertility. The couple's act of eating from the same leaf, and the Tiyyar girl's act of mixing sweet porridge, grinding with a grindstone, and 'cohabiting' with the loin-cloth of the bridegroom, may be interpreted as symbolic intercourse.

In the North Malabar Tiyyar rite the barber as well as the *tāli*-tier appears as a vicarious bridegroom. Before the *tāli* is tied, he uncovers the girl's face and head, an act performed by the bridegroom in many Hindu marriage-rites. He then places coins in her hair and pours on to them coconut water from an *aswatha* leaf. Since this leaf represents Vishnu and male creative power, I regard the pouring of coconut water from it on to the coins as symbolic intercourse.[1] The barber is paid in cloths for his services, much as the ritual bridegroom is paid in South Malabar Nayar and Tiyyar rites.

In all the groups, then, it was necessary for a girl to be, at least symbolically, deflowered before puberty. Next, the girl is secluded for three days before the rite under circumstances almost identical with those of the first menstruation. Like a woman during that period, she might not eat meat, salt, tamarind or chillies, nor see a man, tree, plant, crow, dog, or cat. Among the Tiyyars, Thurston (1906, p. 3) reports that in some areas she kept an arrow, said to be the arrow of Kama Devan, always beside her.

This seclusion with an arrow looks like symbolic cohabitation with a token bridegroom, as in the South Malabar Tiyyar girl's seclusion with the loin-cloth of the bridegroom *after* the *tāli*-rite. At the same time, it must be noted that among Tiyyars, Nayars, and also some Tamil castes, a woman keeps beside her a knife during menstruation; it is said to ward off attack by evil spirits.

These observances of the first menstruation and of the mock-menstruation before the *tāli*-rite must be seen in the context of a set of beliefs concerning menstruation in general. It is believed that a Nayar or Tiyyar woman is in a dangerous as well as a polluting condition during menstruation, especially the first. It is feared that, if she disregards any of the prohibitions, she may be raped by evil spirits, appearing as hairy animals. This circumstance results in hysterical, dissociated behaviour or in dangerous loss of blood. It is said also that if a man foolhardily copulated with a menstruous woman, he would become impotent. Similarly, if the woman were to urinate at the base of a tree, or walk in a paddy-field, the tree or the paddy would wither and die. If she were to approach a temple or the ancester-shrine of her *tarawād*, the temple-god or the ancestors might inflict her with excessive bleeding, or strike her dead.

To interpret these beliefs, I make use of Ernest Jones's (1931, pp. 44, 54, 73) theory that the evil spirits of myths, superstitious beliefs, and daytime phantasies arise from the same unconscious source as those of nightmares, and that the evil shapes seen in nightmares invariably issue from repressed incestuous desires, the fear engendered by which causes the desired object to appear in terrible form. The hairy animal-spirits who may rape a menstruous woman are thus male parent-imagines. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact of the fear of attack from a god or dead *kāranavan*'s spirit (patrilineal among South Malabar Tiyyars, matrilineal in the other groups), should the menstruous woman approach them. Since it causes dangerous bleeding, the attack by a god or an ancestor is evidently sexual, like that by the hairy animals: all therefore probably indicate an unconscious dread of being raped by a male parental figure with, underlying this, a repressed incestuous desire.[2]

The fact that evil spirits attack when the woman breaks the prohibitions (e.g. on seeing a man, or some other animal or plant phallic symbol) may reflect fear of the unconscious

[1] For the sexual significance of anointing in general see Ernest Jones (1931, pp. 207-8). Alternatively we may regard the barber's act as that of a paternal figure who, by anointing her, confers fertility on the girl.

[2] Melanie Klein (1932, p. 307) notes that the European girl at puberty frequently exhibits fear that her father may attack and copulate with her in a sadistic way, either because she has had sadistic masturbation phantasies about her mother or because he wishes to get back the penis she has taken from him.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWII Kerala AWII
Nayar
Tiyyar

pays the head washerman the cloth which the girl has worn to cover her head and face.

It seems that in this offering to the household lamp (as in the Tiyyar girl's offering to the lamp and the marriage-pole in North Malabar, when she is instructed by the barber) the washerman stands as a kind of bridegroom to the girl, as he does also by singing songs to increase her fertility (see Freud 1919, ch. 3; Radcliffe-Brown 1939).[1] In some areas of North Malabar the barber, too, sings songs at the *tāli*-rite to increase the fertility of the girl, but I do not know whether these are obscene. In any case, both barber and washermen stand in a special relation of intimacy to the girl during and immediately after her first menstrual pollution, and the barber has the same role during the mock menstrual seclusion before the *tāli*-rite and at the rites representing ceremonial defloration which follow this seclusion.

Why, if it is in some circumstances a ritually polluting act, worthy of a low caste man, symbolically to deflower a woman, do the Nayars and Kshattriyas call holy men of higher caste, and the North Malabar Tiyyar barbers, a respected elder of their community, to tie a woman's *tāli*? This becomes intelligible when we remember that ritual purity and pollution are the positive and negative aspects of a condition best described as *sacer*, supernaturally dangerous or valuable, the reverse of the profane.[2] In South India, a host of situations illustrate this dual nature of the 'sacred' as potentially polluting or potentially unusually pure. Thus faeces and urine are normally ritually polluting, yet the dung and urine of the sacred cow (a mother symbol) are eaten or sprinkled to purify oneself of the pollutions of death, of birth or of sin. The virgin, then, in these castes is sacred: it is ritually dangerous to take her virginity. My hypothesis is that this is so because the virgin is unconsciously associated with the mother, as a woman whom it is desirable to approach sexually but who may not be approached, because of the threat of castration or murder by a male parental figure (originally the father and, in the matrilineal castes, the mother's brother). I think that this is so because the virgin is still in the possession of her own jealous natal kinsmen, who own, though they may not use, her sexuality. She is, therefore, feared by men of her own age-group, who feel that it is the place of some father-figure (unconsciously, their own father or mother's brother) to take her virginity. A father-figure common to the whole society is therefore summoned, symbolically (and sometimes actually) to deflower the girl, release her, in respect of her sexuality, from the ownership of her natal kinsmen, and leave her, divorced on the fourth day, as a normal mature woman who 'may now do what she pleases'.

In the higher matrilineal castes the bridegroom has all the attributes of a father to the Nayar community. When the *desavan* ties the *tāli*, he is a father-figure to the village as a whole: in some villages he even has the title of *acchan* ('father'). The *nāḍuvari* is a father-surrogate to the *desavaris*, and the king, to the *nāḍuvaris*. The Nambudiris are 'fathers' to the whole Nayar and Kshattriya community, being the greatest landowners, the highest in ritual

[1] This impression of the washerman as symbolic bridegroom was strengthened by an incident in Palakkara. Five years previously, a Nayar girl of eleven in a family of newcomers had menstruated before her *tāli* was tied. Fearing neighbourly disapproval, her mother called the low caste washerman (Mannan) to the house and paid him to tie the girl's *tāli*, on the third day while she was still in menstrual pollution. He then brought the loin-cloth for the ceremonial bathing as usual on the fourth day, and performed the normal ceremonies, which were attended without unfavourable comment by other Nayars of the village. The girl's elder sister explained that, having failed to obtain a Nayar 'bridegroom' before the menstruation, or to tie the *tāli* herself before a temple god, the mother acted correctly in calling the washerman during pollution, thus saving her daughter from the danger of castration by the caste.

[2] The employment of a kinswoman of the bridegroom to perform all or part of the marriage rites on his behalf is common in the 'real' marriage ceremonies of many Hindu castes. A Tamil Brahman bridegroom only half ties his wife's *tāli*; his sister stands behind the girl to tie the second half of the knot. Among Travancore Tiyyars, the bridegroom's sisters and mother go to the bride's house without him for the real post-puberty marriage, where the sister recites the formulae on his behalf and later brings home the bride. Sociologically, the part played by a man's kinswoman in his marriage reflects, no doubt, these own interest in the marriage and rights in the bride. But in all the instances we may, from a psychological point of view, interpret the bridegroom's withdrawal in favour of a kinswoman as evidence of his fear to marry, a fear originally engendered by his Oedipal wishes and dread of paternal vengeance. Alternatively, the bridegroom's unconscious fear of his elder kinsmen's vengeance may be got over in the reverse manner by requiring these elders to absent themselves from the marriage-rite, as in the *sambandham* ceremonies of North Malabar Nayars.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWII Kerala AWII
Nayar
Tiyyar

and the five products of the cow. This ends their pollution and also the prohibition on using oil for cooking and bathing during the pollution period. The ability of a low caste man to purify a family from pollution (when in other contexts he is less pure than they) is an anomalous situation common in South India which has not so far been explained in sociological terms. It is paralleled by the fact that the washerman's purifying cloth is used by a woman to bathe in after menstruation; the washerman must also supply a similar purifying cloth for Nayars and Tiyyars to stand on when they are being purified by cow's excrements from the pollution of death. In some contexts, the Nayars recognize this anomaly, and thus employ two priests for death-rites, the lower caste funeral priest for ties during pollution, and the Elayad, a low sub-caste of Nambūdiris ranking above Nayars, to purify them and instruct them in final rites to the spirit. The Elayad also consecrates the South Malabar Nayar *tāli*, so that the Tiyyar barber may be compared to him as a functionary in the *tāli*-rite. In addition, the barber acts as a priest in Tiyyar family shrines in North Malabar dedicated to Bhagavadi and to ancestors. Finally, as barber, he performs the ceremonial hair-cutting of a Tiyyar boy at the age of three, and the ceremonial shaving of a Tiyyar man at a funeral and before other ritual occasions, including the *tāli*-rite of his nieces and daughters.

I suggest that the barber, both as a polluting 'younger' person and as a holy one who can conduct Tiyyar ceremonies and purify them from pollution, is both a son-surrogate and a father-surrogate for Tiyyars. His association in death-ceremonies with the spirits of Tiyyar leads me to suspect that he is identified with the ancestors, who, in psycho-analytic terms, collectively represent the father.[1] In this role the barber would resemble the washerman, his 'twin' in the caste-hierarchy, who in masked dances impersonates the dead ancestors and local heroes of both Nayars and Tiyyars in North Malabar and of Tiyyars in the south, and, while possessed by them, declares their will to the *taravād*. We have seen that the washerman, like the barber, may be viewed as a proxy bridegroom to the Tiyyar or Nayar girl in the puberty rites where he instructs her to perform offerings to the lamp as a phallic symbol and sings lewd songs to enhance her fertility.

The barber is also, however (because of hypergamous Tiyyar-barber marriages), a son-figure, and in general caste-terms a junior to the Tiyyar. In this role his ability to act as a kind of bridegroom at the *tāli*-rite reminds us of the practice of South Malabar Tiyyars, who select a small boy of an affine *taravād* as proxy bridegroom in the rite. Until about the age of eight, a boy may touch mature women of his own or another lineage. The fact that the small bridegroom is carried into the marriage-shed in the arms of his maternal uncle renders harmless his 'marriage' to the bride: he is a child, brought by a father-figure who adjures him to perform the rite. This fits my hypothesis that the immature girl in these castes is unconsciously likened to the mother: only a father-figure, an infant, or some generalized 'polluted' yet 'holy' figure may approach her with impunity.

My hypothesis that the virgin is unconsciously associated with the mother as a forbidden sexual object rests partly on the fact that in these rites the girl is brought into association with Bhagavadi, the mother-goddess of Nayars and Tiyyars. A branch of her milk-tree is set

[1] A psychoanalyst might probably see in the barber's other roles that of father-surrogate. Hair-cutting and shaving are in many parts of the world likened to castration or to a weakening of sexual power. Among Tiyyars they are ceremonially performed for boys at the age of three to five, and for men immediately after a death in the family. The ceremonial head-shaving of a boy (like the ceremonial ear-boring by the goldsmith, another low-caste functionary) is believed to reduce his *sakthi* (strength) and render him immune to the evil eye of the envious or to attacks from ghosts. It is possible to argue that the rite is a symbolic castration, performed to protect the child, in phantasy, from the danger of real castration at the hands of his jealous father, whose form is projected in the evil eye and in ghosts who attack small children. After a death, the ritual shaving of the heir is part of a complex of rites to ward off the vengeful anger of the spirit. It goes along with abstention from intercourse and from sexually stimulating foods, and the carrying of a knife (phallic talisman?) by the heir to ward off the murderous attack of the spirit. I associate head-shaving, like sexual abstinence, with symbolic castration of the mourner to avert the castrating and murderous wrath of the deceased whom, in his unconscious mind, the mourner himself has murdered.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar
Tiyyar

up in the marriage shed and the rites are conducted before it. Among Nayars it is planted near the sacred corner-post which as we saw is probably a phallic symbol. Among Tiyyars a small branch of the tree is tied to the marriage-pole, thus indicating, perhaps, that Bhagavadi is being 'married' to the divine male tree. The girl is seated upon a plank of the milk-tree. Among Nayars the *tāli*-rite is followed by offerings to appease the angry mother.

Bhagavadi or Devi (generic terms meaning goddess) is equated by Nayars and Tiyyars with Durgha and with Kali or Bhadrakali, fierce puranic goddesses who were created by Siva and are his consorts, though, unlike Parvathi his 'regular' wife, they are not represented as actually married to him. Bhadrakali is a black, hideous-faced demon; she is encircled with snakes, has a garland of skulls, four hands holding weapons, long claws and tusks, a protruding tongue, and a mouth dripping blood. She rides upon a lion. She is said by Nayars to have been born from fire which issued in anger from the third eye of Siva to destroy the sacrifice which Daksha, Siva's father-in-law, had prepared for the other gods to the exclusion of Siva himself. Bhadrakali destroyed the sacrificial objects and beheaded Daksha.

Durgha (who is often not distinguished by Malayalis from Kali) rides on a tiger and has ten hands holding weapons. These were given to her by the gods as emblems of their power, to enable her to kill Mahisasura, a buffalo-demon who had gained control of the worlds of gods and men. Both Durgha and Kali have destroyed, beheaded, dismembered, and eaten many other demons in their wars on behalf of the gods.

Other myths of Bhagavadi temples describe the goddess's devotion to Siva and attacks on demons who opposed him. In the myth of the temple at Cape Comorin, Bhagavadi is a virgin with eight brothers who divided between them the kingdom of Bharatha Kandam. Bhagavadi took the southernmost portion round Cape Comorin. Here she did penance to Siva and, when he promised her a boon, desired to copulate with him. He replied that she must first kill Vanasuran, a demon who, by excessive penance to Siva, had gained control of the earth. Vanasuran heard of Bhagavadi and came to marry her. He found her as a beautiful maiden swinging in her garden. She requested him to bring her the flowers of three kinds of fig tree, but, when he did so, she caused them to disappear.[1] Seeing she would not yield, Vanasuran took his sword and fought the virgin who, appearing in terrible form, pierced him with her own sword and cut off his head with her disc. His body disappeared in a hole in the earth, from which sprang a bathing-pool called *chakkra-theertham* ('disc-water').

Bhagavadi is represented by Nayars and Tiyyars both as a mother and as a virgin. The dead Nayar or Tiyyar virgin can, moreover, herself become a species of Bhagavadi. It was formerly believed that if a girl died before the *tāli* was tied, her jealous and malignant spirit hovered round the earth inflicting misfortune on her *tarawād*. She was called a *Kannichāru* ('dead virgin'); a shrine must be erected to her and offerings made by her kin. It is this curious equation of the mother and the virgin which leads me to believe that the virgins for whom the *tāli* is tied (and who are associated with Bhagavadi in the rites) are also unconsciously likened to the mother.

I suggest an interpretation of the Bhagavadi myths which subsumes under one theory both the myths and the *tāli*-rite. That Bhagavadi is their chief deity reflects the supreme importance of the mother in the life of the Nayar and Tiyyar man. The myths show repressed hostility to and fear of the mother which, because of the values of the kinship system, cannot be made conscious and expressed openly in social life. That Bhagavadi dismembers and eats the demons reflects the infant's projection upon the mother of his own oral frustrations in the period of suckling (commonly prolonged to the age of three or four, but abruptly terminated if a sibling is born) and his desire to attack and tear to pieces the mother. Bhagavadi's snake ornaments, weapons, projecting tongue, tusks, claws, and lion and tiger

[1] One of the trees was the *Ficus religiosa* (see p. 54).

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar
Tiyyar

vehicles, indicate that she is a phallic mother, the 'mother with a penis' who is a common phantasy for European children too. It is well known that in the unconscious minds of Europeans, the phallic mother usually and perhaps always represents the mother armed with the father's penis, which she has acquired in an act of sadistic intercourse. The infant's fear of approaching her sexually thus becomes a fear of being attacked and castrated by the angry penis of the father which the mother has taken as her weapon. In the myths the demon may in each case be interpreted as a son-figure, for in each case he acquires power as a devotee who does penance to Siva, the father-god in the Tamil and Malayalam countries. The son attacks the mother sexually, but she is pre-armed by Siva or by the other gods with their weapons. In some myths she uses their phallic symbol, the sword (a common castration symbol), to behead the demon-son. In the myth of Vanasuran she pierces the demon with the sword and then kills him with her disc. I associate being killed by means of this circular weapon with being castrated by the vagina in intercourse, and the disappearance into the hole with annihilation by being swallowed up in the mother's body, a phantasy which we see too in the fear of being eaten by the mother. Behind this fear may lie an unconscious desire to return to the womb. This interpretation is likely because bathing in the *chakkra-theertham* at Cape Comerin is a means of becoming pure from sin, and purificatory bathing, a common rebirth symbol.

I suggest that the fear of deflowering a virgin issues from this association of her with the phallic mother since, like the mother, she is still in the possession of her lineage kinsmen and defended by their sexual organs, which (in phantasy) they or she may use to castrate or attack an aggressor. We saw how, in the Nayar rite, the lineage men in fact attack the bridegroom with 'phallic' missiles (plantain fruits) and how the ritual play with swords suggests a sexual attack and defence.

A further reason why the *tdli* must be tied before puberty may be that the menstruous woman is particularly closely associated with the mother, menstrual blood (see the blood-dripping mouth of Bhadrakali) recalling the infantile phantasy of parental intercourse as a sadistic attack by the father in which the mother is wounded and bleeds, but castrates him and acquires the penis. A virgin who had menstruated but was still in the possession of her lineage kinsmen would thus be too terrifying a creature to deflower. This may be why a woman who matured before the *tdli* was tied (i.e. before she was symbolically deflowered and removed from the sexual protection of her kinsmen) was considered irrevocably polluting, a creature to be driven from caste and with whom it would be madness to cohabit. It was therefore desirable to make her attain puberty fictitiously in advance by the mock menstruation ceremony, and then actually or symbolically to deflower her before she was in fact mature. Even so, the bridegroom must be a polluted low caste person, whose ritual purity could not be further endangered, or a father-figure to the society at large, or a small boy whose act appears innocuous, or a woman on behalf of her son.

My association of the menstruous woman with the phallic, blood-dripping divine mother rests on the fact that, like the goddess, she is 'sacred' and may not be approached; that she is armed with a knife to ward off evil spirits; and that she is credited with the power to make men impotent (castrate them) if they foolhardily copulate with her. It must be noticed too that the obscene songs sung by the washermen at a Nayar or a Tiyyar girl's first menstruation are sung on another occasion, namely the annual Bharani festival to the Bhadrakali of Kodungalur temple in Cochin. In this festival the temple, normally closed to the 'polluting' castes below Nayars, is for seven days flung open to them and deliberately polluted. On the day previous to Bharani, Nayar and low caste pilgrims, drunk with toddy, armed with long staffs, and carrying live cocks, flock in thousands to the temple from all parts of Malabar. On the road they sing obscene songs to the goddess and revile in filthy language women whom they meet.

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7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar
Tiyyar

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language women whom they meet. At the temple they are received by young Nayar girls who sell to them a mixture of yellow turmeric powder, blessed by *mantras*, and receive in return a volley of sexual abuse. Thousands of cocks are sacrificed in the temple yard by the pilgrims as an offering to Bhagavadi who is believed to drink their blood. Hundreds of Nayar, Tiyyar, and Mannan Bhagavadi oracles from all over Malabar prance wildly in the temple courtyard in their red cloths and waist-bands of bells, madly chopping their foreheads till blood flows copiously. In the evening, at a sign from the *nāḍuvāri* of Kodungalur, the chief of the Mukkuvans (a low fishing caste of the same culture as Tiyyars) begins the work of polluting the actual shrine by rushing up to it and beating the outer wall with his stick. According to Fawcett (1901 p. 245), he formally entered the shrine and defecated on the idol. The crowd of Nayar and low caste men then hurtle, shouting foul abuse, round the shrine, beat on its walls, and fling gold and filth into its interior. The festival ends at dusk when they return quietly home. The next day, the Bharani day itself, the temple is locked and deserted in fear, since it is believed that for seven days following, the foul demon attendants of the goddess are given over to depredations of the shrine and of the idol itself. On the seventh day, its priests reopen the temple, ritually purify it, and restore it to normal high caste worship again.[1]

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This attack on the goddess by low caste men who may not normally approach her represents, it seems likely, a sexual attack on the mother by son-figures to whom she is normally denied. In it the high caste priests (fathers) vacate the temple; the rules of purity and pollution are reversed; animal sacrifice is indulged in; women and the goddess are insulted in a manner contrary to everyday etiquette; and the Bhagavadi idol formally made the object of an anal attack. The ceremony appears to act out cathartically the incestuous phantasies of Nayar and low caste men towards their mother, and incidentally, in their obscene attack on the Nayar girls, the repressed desires of low caste men towards forbidden women of the higher castes. I suggest that in the singing of obscene songs by the washermen at a Nayar or Tiyyar puberty ceremony, and the use of the barber as a kind of proxy bridegroom at the North Malabar Tiyyar *tāli*-rite, these low caste men act out similar phantasies towards higher-caste mother-figures, as well as providing the higher castes with harmless 'polluted' bridegrooms who perform the necessary but dangerous tasks associated with bringing their girls to womanhood.

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Why should the Oedipal fear in these castes be so excessively strong that it is necessary ceremonially to renounce the rights in the sexuality of a natal kinswoman before her puberty, yet at the same time dangerous to be the first to receive these rights? I suggest that this is so because of the great power accorded to elders in these castes, made possible by the joint ownership of property by the lineage-segment under the legal headship of its senior man. These property-arrangements perpetuate, often until middle age, male economic and emotional dependence on the parental generation, and enforce the attitudes of reverence and masochistic submission to elders which so characterize the higher Hindu castes. This dependence on the parental generation causes male incestuous wishes to remain primarily fixed on the mother, and secondarily on other close natal kinswomen throughout life, and perpetuates the corresponding unconscious fear of male parental vengeance. It is, therefore, in male phantasy, both necessary to give away the sexual rights in natal kinswomen (who are identified with the mother as desirable but forbidden sexual objects) before they are in danger of becoming mature, yet at the same time dangerous to deflower the virgins of other lineages who, being still 'owned' by their own natal kinsmen, are also unconsciously likened

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To the mother.

[1] I saw this festival in 1949. For fuller accounts see Thurston & Rangachari, (1909, V, pp. 400-05) and K. P. Padmanabha Menon (1924, IV, pp. 333-43).

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar
Tiyyar

588 171 is strong or (as we should expect) permits divorce and return to the brother's household; whether her natal kinsmen retain strong rights in a woman throughout her life; and whether the virgin is in any way associated in myth with a phallic mother-goddess.[1]

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[1] The male fear of deflowering a virgin, who may be unconsciously associated with the mother and is thus thought of as the rightful property of a father-figure or of an infant son-figure, appears in the marriage customs of several other South Indian peoples. The patrilineal Tamil Non-Brahmans of Tanjore, who have post-puberty marriage, formerly required the brahman priest who performed their marriage rites to deflower the girl as well. The fact that in these castes the mother's brother is considered the rightful husband of a girl gives further evidence of the belief that a girl should rightly be married by a man of the parental generation. Thurston (1906, pp. 49-50) reports that in the Malayali hill-tribe of Salem (also Tamil) a small boy is married to a mature woman, but the bride's father-in-law and not the husband cohabits with her and begets children on behalf of his son. When the son reaches maturity and his own legal sons are married, he in turn cohabits with their wives and raises children on behalf of his 'sons'. The Vellalas of Coimbatore are said to have a similar custom, in which a boy marries a mature woman, with whom the girl's father-in-law cohabits until the boy is adult. Similarly among the Reddis of Tinnevelly, a boy of five is reported often to be married to a girl of twenty. The girl after marriage cohabits with one of her own kinsmen on the maternal side, frequently her mother's brother, or else with the father of her boy-husband. When the husband grows up, he may in some cases never cohabit with his wife, but instead form a liaison with the wife of some other boy-kinsman. Among the Tamil Vallambans a boy is obliged to marry one or other type of cross-cousin, who may be older than himself. The girl then cohabits with her husband's elder brother, mother's brother or father, and the boy-husband legitimatizes the children when he comes of age. In all these customs we appear to have the reflection of a strong Oedipal conflict which, on the one hand, prevents a man from deflowering and sometimes from cohabiting at all with his wife and causes him to give her to his father or some other father-figure, and, on the other hand, gives such free rein to incestuous desires towards women of the filial generation as to permit men to deprive their social 'sons' of their legal wives. The defloration of a girl by one who is a father-figure to her husband is not, of course, confined to India, but appears for example in the European custom of the *droit du seigneur*. At the initation of a Banaro girl, her prospective bridegroom's father, being 'ashamed' to do it himself, engaged his sib-friend to deflower the girl (Thurnwald 1916, p. 261).

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

nuts, which are also given to all the persons assembled at the place. After the departure of the guests, the bridegroom retires to the bed room with the bride.

This is an unvarnished account of a *Pudamuri*. Next morning *veetil kettu* or *salkàram* ceremony follows, and the relations of the bridegroom take the bride to the husband's house, where the bride's party are treated to a grand feast".[1]

The *sambandham* or *Pudamuri* ceremony is not a marriage in the legal or sacramental sense of the term. The views of the members of the orthodox community in Malabar, who are the expounders of the existing customs, are of great ethnographic importance. It is said that the Nambuthiris consort with Nayar females by *sambandham*, and precisely the same ceremony is gone through whether the husband is a Nambuthiri or a Nayar. The Nambuthiris do not look upon it as a marriage. Where a Brahman is a bridegroom, he cannot eat with his Sudra wife, and is therefore unable to join with his wife in the wedding feast. There is no comparison of horoscopes. The aristocracy of the District of Malabar, the Rajas who are admittedly the heads of the Nayar caste, and the Nambuthiris who are the expounders of religion, opine, that chastity is not one of the duties prescribed for the Nayar community and *slokas* (verses) are quoted to prove this. This view is not held in the Cochin State.

The orthodox view of this form of marriage.

In the Malabar Marriage Commission, one hundred and ninety-seven witnesses admitted the undoubted fact that either party to the union may terminate it at any time from wantonness, caprice or any other reason, and that if the couple joined together by *Pudamuri* were satisfied with one night of hymeneal bliss, there is no legal impediment to prevent their separating without any formality on the following morning. Ninety-one witnesses alleged some formality to be necessary, and that parties should not separate without the approval of their *kdranavans* or of their relatives or of their caste people. There was also a small minority (twenty-one witnesses) who denied to the women the right of divorce which they accorded to man, assigning as their reason, that, under the Hindu Law, no woman can be independent. This minority would deprive

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 35-37.

13: Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date)
1909 AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

First they learn to dance and then to tumble, and for that purpose they render supple all their limbs from their childhood, so that they can bend them in any direction. . . . These Nairs live outside the towns separate from other people on their estates which are fenced in. When they go anywhere, they shout to the peasants, that they may get out of the way where they have to pass; and the peasants do so, and, if they did not do it, the Nairs might kill them without penalty. And, if a peasant were by misfortune to touch a Nair lady, her relations would immediately kill her, and likewise the man that touched her and all his relations. This, they say, is done to avoid all opportunity of mixing the blood with that of the peasants. . . . These are very clean and well-dressed women, and they hold it in great honour to know how to please men. They have a belief amongst them that the woman who dies a virgin does not go to paradise."

Writing in the eighteenth century, Hamilton states * that "it was an ancient custom for the Samorin (Zamorin) to reign but twelve years, and no longer. If he died before his term was expired, it saved him a troublesome ceremony of cutting his own throat on a public scaffold erected for that purpose. He first made a feast for all his nobility and gentry, who were very numerous. After the feast he saluted his guests, went on the scaffold, and very neatly cut his own throat in the view of the assembly. His body was, a little while after, burned with great pomp and ceremony, and the grandees elected a new Samorin. Whether that custom was a religious or a civil ceremony I know not, but it is now laid aside, and a new custom is followed by the modern Samorin, that a jubilee is

* New Account of the East Indies, 1744.

564 or with one of the small sects coming between the Brāhmans and the Nāyars. But she cannot under any circumstances unite herself with a man of a clan, which
[264] is inferior to hers. Nor can she eat with those of a clan inferior to her; a man may, and does without restriction.
564 Her children by an equal in race and not only in mere
651 social standing, but never those by one who is racially
613 inferior, belong to her taravād.* The children of the inferior mothers are never brought into the taravād of the superior fathers, *i.e.*, they are never brought into it to belong to it, but they may live there. And, where they do so, they cannot enter the taravād kitchen, or touch the women while they are eating. Nor are they allowed to touch their father's corpse. They may live in the taravād under these and other disabilities, but
557 are never of it. The custom, which permits a man
564 to cohabit with a woman lower in the social scale than
831 himself, and prohibits a woman from exercising the same liberty, is called the rule of anulōmam and pratilōmam. Dr. Gundert derives anulōmam from anu, with lōmam (rōmam), hair, or going with the hair or grain. So pratilōmam means going against the hair or grain. According to this usage, a Nāyar woman, consorting with a man of a higher caste, follows the hair, purifies the blood, and raises the progeny in social estimation.
558 By cohabitation with a man of a lower division (clan)
564 or caste, she is guilty of pratilōmam, and, if the
831 difference of caste were admittedly great, she would be turned out of her family, to prevent the whole
564 family being boycotted. A corollary of this custom
851 is that a Nambūtiri Brāhman father cannot touch his
783 own children by his Nāyar consort without bathing

* Tarwād or taravād, a marumakkathayam family, consisting of all the descendants in the female line of one common female ancestor.